# A SERMON

# The Fatal Consequences of Gaming and Stock-jobbing

A

# SERMON

Preach'd in the

# City of LONDON,

On SUNDAY, November 6. 1720.

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Preach'd in the

## City of *LONDON*,

ON

SUNDAY, *November* 6. M.DCC.XX.

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*By a Presbyter of the* Church of England.

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*Ne* Magistratum Creditori *debeamus cavendum est.*
Salust.

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*LONDON*,

Printed for T. JAUNCY, at the *Angel* without *Temple-Bar* M.DCC.XX.

(Price Sixpence.)

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# NAHUM, ch. iii. ver. 1.

*Woe to the bloody City! it is all full of* Lyes *and* Robberies, *the Prey departeth not.*

HERE is a Denunciation of Woe and Misery, pronounced by the Mouth of the Prophet *Nahum*, againſt the City of *Nineveh*; a terrible Threatning of the Divine Vengeance, which was ſhortly to be put in execution on the Head of her, and the *Nation* to whom ſhe belonged.

In the height of her Pride, in the Fulneſs of her Plenty, *Companions ſeldom ſeparated*, comes this Alarm from Heaven, to warn the People that her Glories were but of a ſhort Continuance; that her Plenty ſhould end in Scarcity, her Pride in Vaſſalage, and the very Riches ſhe relied on as her Defence, ſhould prove her Betrayer, tempting the Enemy to make a more vigorous Siege, and convert her Treaſure to the Uſe of the Spoiler. Many and frequent Warnings had this mighty City of the Wrath in ſtore for her; ſome of which gave her ſhort Fits of Repentance, paſſing away like the *Morning Cloud*, and being ſucceeded by a long Sun-ſhine of Pleaſure, that made her at laſt either unfit, or unwilling to reform her Ways; and all tending to make her a fit Object of the Divine Judgment. What Mercy cannot ſoften, Anger muſt break; and when the Voice of Warning cries in vain, the Scourge of Puniſhment muſt follow, elſe Heaven itſelf will not be juſtified, and the Heart of Man be hardened to a Defiance of it. But it is fit you ſhould know what were the *particular Sins* of this famous *City*, that called ſo loud for the Miniſters of Wrath, and in what condition ſhe was then in, when the time of her Viſitation drew near, and

all her Pride was haſtening to be laid level with the Earth, and ſhe to *be heard of no more* as a *City*.

This then was the *Metropolis* of the *Aſſyrian Empire*, equal at leaſt, if not more than a Rival to the famous *Babylon*, of which both Profane and Sacred Hiſtory give us ſuch wonderful Accounts; far exceeding in Beauty, Strength, and Magnificence, all the Cities of the Eaſt. It was ſituated on the River *Tigris*, an Advantage that made it not only pleaſant, but moſt convenient for Traffic and Navigation. Hence the Prophet ſays, that ſhe *multiplied her Merchants above the Stars of Heaven*; ſo *numerous* and ſo *dazzling* a Croud of them there were, as to juſtify the Boldneſs of the Figure, of their being greater in Number and Brightneſs than the Stars of the Firmament. Riches, we too well know, are apt to ſhow themſelves in ſumptuous Ornaments, and external Splendor, and no doubt the *Merchants* of *Nineveh* had their Vanities in proportion to their Wealth. We ſhall leſs wonder at this, when we conſider to what a height ſome of the *Eaſtern Cities* carried their Commerce, inſomuch that their *Merchants* were equal, if not ſuperior, to moſt Princes. So certainly *Iſaiah* deſcribes thoſe of *Tyre*, which he *calls* the *crowning*

*City*, whose *Merchants are Princes*, whose *Traffickers are the Honourable of the Earth*, *Names*, *Titles* and *Dignities*, we may observe, came in with the Tide of Treasure, the rich Dealer was either weary of his Plainess, or the flattering World made him a Compliment of *something* above what he was born to; and thus the *Trafficker* became *the Honourable of the Earth*.

That the City of *Nineveh* was grown to this vast Encrease, and even Excess of Riches, will not be questioned, if we only remember that it must be of a mighty Extent, since *Jonah* was three Days in travelling it round, *Jonah* iii. 3. which allowing twenty Miles in a Day, makes sixty of our Miles. Thus great, thus magnificent was this *City*; and we have no reason to suppose, but that her internal Grandeur, her beautiful Palaces, her delicious Gardens, with all the Luxuries of the *East*, reigned and abounded within the Walls. We may add to this, that she was the Seat of *Empire*, the Residence of the *Assyrian* Monarch; a Circumstance which *alone* is enough to convince us, there wanted no Temptations that could seduce to Vice or Vanity, either inhabiting with her, or brought into her Bosom by such Royal Visitors. *Courts*, we may be assured, are no great Reformers of *Cities*,

 and

and the best Happiness is, when they are contented with the Vices they find upon the spot, and bring no new ones to enflame the Account. But when a rich and flourishing People are once excited to rival those, whose Education in Palaces, and the Duty of their Places, set them forward in Show and Ostentation; then it is no wonder if we hear, as in *Nineveh*, *of the Noise of the Whip, the Noise of the rattling of the Wheels, and the jumping of the Chariots.* Full of such Vices as these, and laying Schemes for future Extravagancies, was this proud City, when the Word of God threaten'd her Destruction; not without setting before the Eyes of the People a Catalogue of those Crimes that provoked the Hand of Justice to lay heavy on them, and bring them to utter Destruction. Her Crimes are enumerated in the Text, and some of the following Verses; *she was a bloody City*, delighting in Rapine and illegal Means of Oppression and Extortion, that suck'd the Vitals of the Public, impoverishing *many* to make a *few* great and wealthy. She was full of *Lyes* and *Robberies*, the one being usually the effect of the other; a *Lye* either preparing a Snare for the Innocent, or defending the Guilt when committed. Again, she is described in the fourth Verse

under

under the *Emblem* of a *well-favoured Harlot, the Mistress of Witchcrafts, that sold Nations through her Whoredoms, and Families through her Witchcrafts.* A fair and passing Outside was her Portion, mark'd with Features of Beauty, and Smiles of Deceit, to tempt and engage the unwary Heart; but her Inside was Cunning, Mystery, and *Witchcraft*; her Tricks and Frauds baffling and eluding the Eye of the Spectators: so *that when they found themselves undone, they could not comprehend by what Means their Ruin was effected.* Like one who is led blind to a Precipice, and thrown down from thence, who feels the Pain of his Fall, but neither knows the Hand that conducted him to it, nor the Means to recover himself. Nor was this proud *City* a Dealer in single Miseries, picking here and there whom she might destroy; no, that was but a poor and mean Prey to satisfy her Appetite. She set whole *Families* to sale, uniting them in the sad Relation of Misery, as well as that of Nature; she sold *whole Nations*, and trafficked in universal Destruction. These were the Sins of *Nineveh*, and I wish there was no *City* on the Earth that bore any resemblance to them; that there were no such Marks of *bloody Oppression*, of *extravagant Pride*, and *mysterious*

*rious Treachery*; no, not their Footſteps to be found on the Face of the Earth. However, whether there be ſuch a Place or no, or in what Latitude it lies, ſhall not be the Buſineſs of the preſent Enquiry; ſufficient it is, both for Example and Inſtruction, that there was ſuch a *Metropolis* once in *Aſſyria*, that by ſuch wicked Means its Crimes gathered into a Ripeneſs for Deſtruction, and that the ſame Guilt deſerves the ſame Puniſhment.

The Doctrines we ſhall raiſe from hence, are, That *National Covetouſneſs* will produce a *National Ruin*.

That it is the ſame thing, whether that *Ruin* be the natural Effect of the Vice, or is brought upon the Land by ſome extraordinary Judgment of Providence.

And laſtly, That it highly becomes us to enquire how far, and in what meaſure, that has been the Condition of this Kingdom.

Firſt then, A National Covetouſneſs will produce a National Ruin.

*Covetouſneſs*, or the eager and inordinate Deſire of acquiring more Riches than is either neceſſary, or convenient, when confined to a ſingle Perſon, is ſo far detri-

mental

mental to the Publick, as it locks up, and restrains such a Moiety of Money, as might be useful in supplying the Wants, and carrying on the Trade and Commerce of the whole Body. When Riches are not very unequally spread among Mankind, in proportion to their Stations, and Classes of Life, the Course of Government goes on easily, unclogged with Murmurings and Complaints; Labour itself is chearful, when its Gains are not cut short by the Hand of the Niggard, and Industry and Invention are whetted to a Rivalship in their several Productions. But the covetous Man first breaks the Spirit of Service, by lowering its Rewards, and then turns Freedom into Slavery, by supplying those Wants the Hardness of his Heart has caused, at the Expence of large Premiums, and unconscionable Interest. What *Joseph* did in a Politic Way, by engrossing all the Corn of *Egypt* into the King's Granary, and selling it out in the Years of Famine to the People, first for *Money*, then for *their Cattle* and *their Flocks*, and next for *their Estates*, and that *every Man sold his Field*; the Miser does without, nay, against the Divine Commission, converting the Fortune, Substance, and Lives of the Needy, to an arbitrary and intolerable Vassalage. How

miserable

miſerable is it, when Wealth falls into ſuch hands, when the Power of oppreſſing is preferred to the Pleaſure of relieving, and the *grinding the Face of the Poor* becomes more eligible, than the making the *Heart of the Widow to ſing for Joy!* From hence ariſe, and multiply thoſe cunning Arts, too univerſally ſpread over theſe Nations, of unfair and unequal *Contracts*, of ſly Injuſtice contracted within the Limits of the *Law*, while *Villany* lays hold of the Handle that *Neceſſity* lends, till at laſt *Poverty* grows too weak to complain, and *Avarice* too deaf, or too proud to hear.

Theſe are ſome, and ſurely too *frequent* Marks of the terrible Effects of this Vice in private Families, where they are oftner (Heaven knows!) mourned in Silence, than uttered aloud, the Sighs of the Miſerable being conſtrued as Affronts to the Rich; and well they may, as upbraiding Witneſſes of the Spoils with which their Pride is clothed.

But alas! what are theſe Calamities, when compared with *Avarice* as a *Public Vice*; when it goes forth triumphantly, and meaſures a whole Nation, *as a Field to be mowed.* When that poor-ſpirited Corruption, which uſually crept in Corners, both hating, and fearing the Light, and

 diſ-

disguised itself in the Weeds and Habit of Poverty, as a Security from the Contempt and Insult of Mankind; when that, I say, no longer needs a Masque, but goes barefaced and unshamed in the Eye of the World, how must the Misery multiply with the Universality of the Vice, and that Ruin, which was the slow Effect of Years, be brought on in Heaps and Multitudes on the Body of a Nation? What must be the consequence, when Vice passes for Virtue, and tricking *Cunning* mimicks *Wisdom*, as *Solomon* describes her; *When she crieth without, when she uttereth her Voice in the Streets, when she crieth in the chief Places of Concourse, in the opening of the Gates, and uttereth her Words in the City?* When the *Spirit* of *Gaming*, which is only the Daughter of *Covetousness*, has thus infected a *whole People*, let us seriously reflect what must be the plain and inevitable End of so popular a Delusion.

Let none be offended, that I call such *Experiments as have been lately made, by Trafficking with Money, Gaming*; for indeed it is no other than *immoderate Play*, which owes its Original to *Avarice*. Vices, it is true, as well as the Owners of them, affect new Names and Disguises; which however Custom and Fashion may

make

make current, they cannot alter the Nature of them, or change the inherent Turpitude of the Act.

The firſt ill Effect that ſuch a *National* Crime produces, is, That it at once cuts ſhort all *Moral* and *Chriſtian Duties*, leaving ſcarce the bare Names of them among Men, and utterly deſtroying the Practice. The Heart of Man, when violently bent in the Purſuit of Riches, neglects or deſpiſes all other Concerns that come in the way of its darling Paſſion: He puts off Religion and the Word of God with a pretence of Buſineſs, crying, with the old Shift, *We will hear thee talk of theſe things another time.* When the Coffers are full, and the Dirt thickens in the hand of the *Miſer*, it will then be time enough, he thinks, to ſerve God, if ever he thinks of ſerving Him at all. He will be very *righteous*, but then he muſt be very *wealthy* firſt; he deſigns *great Charities*, but firſt he muſt be guilty of *great Extortion.* He will relieve the Hungry, and clothe the Naked, but it is neceſſary before he does ſo, that he ſhould ſtarve ſome, and ſtrip others. Thus does he; as it were, drive Bargains with Heaven, and pays down preſent Vices for reverſionary Virtues. But there are but few, that have even theſe irregular Fits of future

Devotion, which indeed are as nothing in the ſight of God; the Generality are wholly immerſed in the Thoughts of their worldly Advantages, them they ſerve, they are their Maſters, and one Maſter, we are told by the beſt Authority, is ſufficient: *We cannot ſerve God and Mammon*, Luke xvi. 13.

Our Neighbour will have as little ſhare of the Duties which are his Right, as Heaven has; the ſame buſy Employment of gathering Riches, excluding him from the Benefits that Society was inſtituted for, and Religion commands to be performed. What Leiſure can they have to aſſiſt others, whoſe Thoughts all center in themſelves? Inſtead of looking upon him with the Eye of Tenderneſs and Compaſſion, the *Covetous* marks him out as his *Prey*, and lies in wait to deceive him, and ſo make him the Object of the Pity of others. Familiarity and Acquaintance are only ſo many Snares in the hands of the *Gameſter* to enſure the Spoil, and bring Ruin in ſecretly under the colour of Kindneſs and Friendſhip. *David*'s Complaint is here again verified, *They walked in the Houſe of the Lord, and took ſweet Counſel together*; and yet from that hand came the ſecret Wound, and the Betrayer was his intimate *Friend*. So certain is it,

that

that no Tie, no Obligation of natural Juſtice, no Force of Religion, can reſtrain the covetous Perſon from Fraud, ſince he has a View ſuperior to all theſe, and which will at any opportunity cancel all other Relations and Dependencies of Civil Society. And when this Vice is become univerſal, how little better is ſuch a Nation, than if ſhe was engaged in *a State of War*, ſince there is nothing but *mutual Plundering and being plundered*, the *mercileſs Deſtroyer*, and the *complaining Sufferer* continually changing hands, and ſhifting from *Pride* to *Beggary*, and *from Beggary to Pride again*. Hear only what a lively Deſcription a Heathen Author gives of this Vice, in ſo ſtrong Colours, that had he not ſeen the Effects, it was impoſſible for him to have painted them ſo feelingly: *Avaritia bellua fera, immanis, intoleranda eſt. Quo intendit, Oppida, Agros, Fana, atque Domos vaſtat: divina cum humanis promiſcet; neque Exercitus, neque Mœnia obſtant, quo minus Vi ſuâ penetrat: Fama, Pudicitia, Liberis, Patria, atque Parentibus cunctos Mortales ſpoliat.* 'Avarice, ſays *Saluſt*, is a wild 'Beaſt, monſtrous, over-grown, intolera-'ble. Wherever it comes, it deſtroys 'Cities, Eſtates, Temples, and Families; 'it makes a jumble of all things ſacred 'and profane: Neither Armies, nor For-

'tifications

'tifications can reſiſt the Violence of its 'Courſe. This is the univerſal Spoiler 'of Mankind, conſuming our Fame, our 'Modeſty, our Children, our Parents, 'our Country.'

Well then might the Apoſtle call *Covetouſneſs the Root of all Evil*, when we ſee into what Branches of Miſery that Root ſpreads, and what bitter Fruit it bears, wherever it happens to be fatally planted. So very true is that Union mentioned in my Text, that *Lyes* and *Robberies*, *Covetouſneſs* and *Cruelty*, go hand in hand together; and the Rear of this unrighteous Army is brought up by *Ruin* and *Deſolation*: which leads me to the ſecond Head propoſed for this Diſcourſe;

That it is the ſame thing, whether that *Ruin* be the natural Effect of the Vice, or is brought upon the Land by ſome extraordinary Judgment of Providence.

The Methods that God Almighty chuſes for the Puniſhment of a Nation are various, ſometimes they fall by a foreign Army, ſometimes an inteſtine War, both Plenty and Want are his Miniſters; a penurious Harveſt, or an infected Air, ſerve the Purpoſes of his Divine Vengeance. But the plaineſt and moſt frequent Corrections proceed from the Vices

Vices of a Nation, which he makes a Scourge to itself; so that the Sin and the Punishment differ only, as the Cause and the Effect. And this Method is most remarkably natural in the case of an *Epidemical Avarice*, and its Companions, *Gaming* and *Usury*, which take as bloody a Revenge on the Nation where they reside, as the *Sword*, *Famine*, or *Pestilence*. The Misery perhaps may not be so violent and sudden, but it is the same thing whether Destruction comes in with the Boldness of an Invader, or steals its Passage with the Obscurity of a Spy, since Ruin is the Consequence. If the one can effect as terrible an Execution as the other, it is as much to be guarded against, and ought as much to be the Care of that Nation, which is likely to prove the Sufferer. And that it is so, we shall demonstrate by the following Particulars. First, *Usury*, which is the Daughter of *Avarice*, lessens the *Number* of *Merchants*, since by that there is such a proportion of Wealth unemploy'd, which in careful and industrious Hands might be used to the Benefit of the State, and the private Encrease of the Trader. This lazy Vice, that loves Home and Safety, takes off from the Multitude of Adventurers; so that it is the same thing to the Society, whether *Providence* had

had locked up so much in the Bowels of the Earth, or the *Usurer* secured it in his Cheſt, it being either way equally unprofitable to the Public.

Another natural ill Effect will be, that it not only makes *fewer*, but *poorer* Traders. Extravagant *Usury*, such as we have seen in our Day, can never be allowed, but to the great Detriment of the Borrower, whose Commodities must by that means either be *purchased* at a double Price, or in half the Proportion, if he can be at all Gainer. Instead of one, he has two Masts to apply to, and his Home-Interest eats out the Profit of his foreign Return. Is it not then the same thing to the poor Sufferer, whether the Fire consume, the Moth destroy, or the Robber steal away his Goods, or the Advantage of them be wasted and decay'd by the preying Hand of the Usurer? Misery cannot alter its *Nature*, tho it may its *Name*; and it is an equal Case, whether illegal Rapine, or secret Extortion, be the immediate Cause of private Ruin. From hence too the State loses the Advantage of Trade, the Revenues lessening as the Commerce decays; which tho perhaps not felt in a few single Instances, yet when they come to be multiplied, the Strength and Vitals of Trade are struck at, and a

Defect

Defect of that kind will ſoon cut the Wings of the moſt flouriſhing Nation.

The next Conſideration is, That this Branch of *Covetouſneſs* diminiſhes and dulls all Induſtry, and by a natural Conſequence induces a lazy unprofitable Diſpoſition on the Minds of Mankind; and ſo far makes them not only unuſeful, but a real Burden to the Public. The Spirit of Invention is ever quicken'd by the View of Reward, but this Vice ſhuts up the Treaſury of Merit, and ſpreads the cold Damp of Deſpair on the moſt lively and active Genius. If the Sinews be wanting, if the Engines that are to work upon the Foundation of a great and glorious Deſign, fall not within the Purchaſe of the Inventor; his Brains might as well have been employed in ſpinning out the Trifles of Amuſement and Folly. For what has he to hope from the *Niggard*, or the *Uſurer*? Will they open their Hands without the View of cloſing them again with the Fruits of his Labour? And what a grievous Conſideration is it to an ingenuous Spirit, to court and bribe Lazineſs and Hardneſs of Heart with the Sale of his Underſtanding, and make the greateſt Gifts of Heaven ſubſervient to the viteſt of its Creatures? Again, who will take pains in an induſtrious Calling,

where Hazards are to be run, and Damages to be ſuſtained, when he ſees an eaſier and more certain Method of growing rich and wealthy without Care, Trouble, or Fear of Loſs? Will he not rather reverſe the Precept in the Goſpel, *ſell all that he has, and follow the Devil*, than ſubmit to the Drudgery of an honeſt Buſineſs, and a ſlow Encreaſe of Profit? If Money thus ſown will bring forth *tenfold*, and a *hundred-fold*, that will afford Temptation enough to neglect and deſpiſe the little Gleanings of a one or a two-fold Harveſt.

Laſtly, Theſe Vices are the Canker of private Eſtates, and that in time muſt produce a national Poverty, and a partial and monſtrous Over-growth of Wealth and Pride in a *few Public Deſtroyers*. This Propoſition will hardly need a Proof, if the foregoing ones are true; nay, if we will but truſt our Senſes, every day's Experience gives too mournful a Teſtimony of this national Danger. Let us then conſider how far this univerſal Scandal of a greedy avaritious Temper affects ourſelves, and we ſhall not want the Foreſight of a Prophet to tell us in what Calamities ſuch a Conduct muſt conclude.

Never

Never ſurely (and may it never be again!) did a general Infatuation of growing haſtily rich, ſo ſpread itſelf over all Orders and Degrees of Mankind. The Scandal of the meaneſt Vice, that can poſſeſs the Heart of Man, was wiped away by becoming a publick and avowed Profeſſion, and taking place without diſtinction in the Boſom of the higheſt as well as the loweſt of the People. Like the *Frogs* of *Egypt*, *that nauſeous and clamorous Plague*, this ſordid Vice *brought forth abundantly*, and came into the *Field*, the *Oven*, the *Kneading-Trough*, the *Houſe*, the *Bed-chamber*, and the Palace of the *King*; ſo that the *Land ſtunk* of it. So very ſtrong and mighty was this Vice, that it almoſt deſtroyed all others, not ſuffering any to come into competition with it, eating up, like *Moſes*'s *Serpent*, the *Snakes* of the *Magicians*. This taught even *Pride* and *Haughtineſs* to leſſen their Port, and become *Beggars* and *Suitors* for Favours at the hands of thoſe, whom yeſterday they deſpiſed. The *Prodigal* began to abridge, and diſſemble Want, to make a larger and more profuſe Riot of his new-gain'd Treaſure. *Pleaſure* itſelf, which ſeldom ſtands ſtill in compliment to any other worldly View, look'd as if it was aſhamed to be out of the Faſhion, and inſenſibly dropt

into the way of the poor-ſpirited Money-gatherer. Who indeed was then exempted from the Infection? Or may we reckon, as *Iſaiah* did on another Occaſion, including *the mighty Man, the Man of War, the Judge, and the Prophet, and the Prudent, and the Antient. The Captain of Fifty, and the Honourable Man, and the Counſellor, and the cunning Artificer, and the eloquent Orator?* Iſa. iii. 3, 4.

All Profeſſions, however different in their other Ways, united in this one Point, giving up the ſlow and natural Encreaſe of Gain by the means of Frugality and Induſtry, to the ſudden Temptation of an haſty and unaccountable Treaſure. Even *Arts* and *Sciences*, which uſually ſtood at a diſtance from ſuch a Corruption, fell into the general Debauchery, and became Proſtitutes to the reigning Idol of the Times. No good Senſe, no Learning, were ſufficient Out-guards againſt this ſtealing Vice; the Underſtanding was led captive, the Paſſions were bribed too high for the Check of Reaſon, and Wiſdom itſelf condeſcended to play the part of Folly and Slavery. And can we ſay that the Infection ſtopped here? Was it not too in the *Sanctuary*, as well as in the *Field*? Did it only lay hold of the *Port* and the *Shop*, or did it not approach to the

*Horns*

*Horns of the Altar?* The Complaint of the Prophet *Iſaiah* was but too true, and too ſadly like what our Eyes have ſeen, when he ſays, *From the leaſt even to the greateſt of them, every one is given to* Covetousness, *and from the Prophet unto the Prieſt, every one dealeth falſely*, Iſa. vi. 13. No Dignity of Character, no Diſtinction of Place or Calling, was a Security againſt this *Mammon* of *Iniquity*; and tho the *Money-Changers were not actually found in the Temple*, yet the internal Pollution of Hearts was the ſame, and the Prophanation of Character as great. *And were they aſhamed when they had committed Abomination? Nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh*, Iſa. vi. 15. Modeſty was drowned in the Tide of Faſhion, and as if *Vice* and *Virtue* had changed both *Name* and *Nature*, the one paſſed currently for the other, and it became almoſt a Mark of Scandal not to pay Worſhip to the *Golden Calf*. They, whoſe *Duty* obliged them to give warning of the growing Evil, were mean enough to betray the Honour of their Calling, and turn Deſerters to the ſide of Avarice and Infamy. It is to be wiſhed that ſuch an Encouragement did not delude many of the Unthinking, and ſanctify the general Wickedneſs. People are but too apt to be ſtruck by the Exam-

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ple of their Teachers, and measure *Right* and *Wrong* by the Authority of Names, which makes their *Silence* a *Connivance*, and their *Practice* a *Rule* to others. If this may sound a little too harshly in the Ears of *some*, be the Shame on their own Heads! It is no new thing for the *Holy Tribe* to share in a general Corruption, yet there are never wanting some excepted from the Scandal, who have had Courage enough to oppose the Torrent of Vice, and prove Witnesses, and Examples in a degenerate Age.

But we must now take notice of another ill Effect of *Covetousness*, equally sinful, and equally dangerous to the State wherein it happens to reign. We find it but too true an Observation, that the Mind of Man is unable to bear up against the Flood of a sudden Prosperity. It is not only the Character of a single *Catiline*, to be *alieni appetens, sui profusus*, craving and carking after the Possessions of others, and profuse of their own at the same time; but it is the general Weakness of human Nature, and that which was gathered hastily, is commonly prodigally consumed. A slow Advance of Fortune must be made by regular and painful steps, which teach the Owner the real Value of what he gains, and make him careful

careful of what coſt him ſo much Labour and Parſimony. There is nothing in the Encreaſe of Subſtance in ſuch a Man to alter his Temper; he has before computed rationally how Affairs will anſwer, and all comes to paſs like the Scheme of a fair Demonſtration. The other being the Conſequence of *Trick* and *Cunning*, *Folly* and *Paſſion*, betrays the Root from whence it ſprung, and bears a ſuitable Fruit. *Pride* and *Luxury*, attended with Exceſſes of all kinds, are the Followers of a *too quick Greatneſs*; neither will there be wanting Wretches ſervile enough to juſtify and applaud the Wantonneſs of Riches, if they can have a ſhare of the Extravagance. Surrounded with Pleaſure, excluded from Advice, and poiſoned with Flattery, what is there ſo wild that the Heart of Man will not conceive, ſo ridiculous that he will not commit, truſting to his Riches, which, as *Solomon* ſays, are *a Stronghold in his Imagination?* Then it is that *Pride* is offended at the Honeſty of a little Neighbour, and ſtretches Juſtice and *Law* to violate Property, and too often to tranſgreſs with Impunity. Then, in the Words of the Prophet, *Judgment is turned away backward, and Juſtice ſtands afar off; Truth is ſullen in the ſtreet, and Equity cannot enter*; Iſ. xlix. 14. What ſhall we ſay

of

of the external Splendor, which appears in the Families of ſuch Men, the daily Conſumptions of Vanity appearing like the *Daughters of corrupted Zion in the tinkling Ornaments, Chains, Bracelets and Mufflers, Bonnets, Tablets, and Ear-rings, Jewels, changeable Suits of Apparel, Mantles, Glaſſes, fine Linen, Hoods, and Vails?* Iſ. iii. Was ever Vanity at ſuch a height as we have lately beheld it, confounding all Diſtinctions of Quality and Order, raiſing *imaginary* Greatneſs, but real Expence, to be follow'd by Want and Beggary? Gorgeous Apparel, our *Saviour* tells us, is *for Kings Courts*, Luke vii. 25. But in our day it was not contented with the Confinement of Decency, but ſpread like a *Plague* over every Place, and every Condition of Mankind. Sobriety of Attire was loſt in Gaudineſs of Equipage and Show, and a Rivalry of Folly ſet up to the Scandal of good Order, and the Deſtruction of the private Contenders. All Places of public Reſort looked not unlike the Deſcription given by *Nahum* of the Army againſt *Nineveh*, where the *Chariots are ſaid to rage in the Street, to juſtle one againſt another in the broad-ways, to ſeem like Torches, and run like Lightning*, Nah. ii. 4. And what can be the end of all this, but a general Calamity, if not

ſpeedily

ſpeedily prevented, by diminiſhing that Vice, which is the Occaſion of it? It was excellent Advice given to *Cæſar*, upon his new-modelling the *Commonwealth*, *Imprimis Fœneratorem tollere, & Pecuniæ Honorem demere*; to *ſuppreſs Uſury*, and diminiſh the *Credit of Riches*, which alone can ſpirit up Induſtry, eſtabliſh Sobriety, and promote real Gains from Traffic and Commerce.

I ſhall add but two Inferences, by way of Application, and detain you no longer. The firſt is, That the *Gainer and Loſer in this Game of Covetouſneſs are equally guilty of the Sin.*

Let no Man, who has been a Trader in this Spoil of Iniquity, flatter himſelf, that becauſe he has not the Remains of his Wealth in a great proportion, that therefore his Conſcience ought not to reproach him for the Sinfulneſs of the Act. The Crime lies deeper perhaps than he is willing to own, even in the *Heart*, where the covetous Deſire began. Our *Saviour*'s Rule extends to all Crimes, and as he *who luſteth after another's Wife, commits Adultery in his Heart*; ſo he who has a deſign on another's Poſſeſſion, whether he gain his point or not, is guilty of *Covetouſneſs*, and commits Robbery in his

Heart. The Precept is as much broke without his Neighbour's ſuffering, as with it; and there is no difference, but as all Sins differ, in degree.

It may ſeem perhaps too daring to look at the mighty Gainer in this view; but his own Reflection will one day admoniſh him, that the *Miſery of Thouſands* is too ſtrong a Cry not to be heard at the Day of Account. His Wealth may ſupport him here in Greatneſs and Grandeur, but there is an *After-Reckoning* to be made, when a chief Article is, that the *covetous Perſon ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of God*; 1 Cor. vi. 10.

The laſt Conſideration I ſhall urge, is, That this *Folly* and *Ruin* are both without Excuſe to our preſent Families and Poſterity.

Had the juſtifiable Reaſons of a foreign War been the occaſion of every private Perſon's willingly draining his Treaſure to ſupport his Country, he might have anſwer'd it to Reaſon and Religion. Had the Fears of parting with his Conſcience been the reaſon of ſacrificing his Purſe, his Poverty had been light and eaſy, without the ſenſe of a guilty Reflection. But when the Motive was *Covetouſneſs*, he cannot blame his Poſterity, if they tax him at once with Folly and Cruelty, in wantonly

cutting off that Subſiſtence, which ſhould have been a Comfort from Generation to Generation. Interpret me not, as if I ſpoke with an evil deſign of reflecting on our *Rulers*; no, it is the *Madneſs of the People* we are to impute this Miſery to. They, no queſtion, will do their parts, to recover them both to their Fortunes and their Senſes; which that they may accompliſh to the Advantage of the *Nation*, and their own *Honour*, let us pray for the Preſervation of *Him*, on whom all depends, King *GEORGE*, *our Governor, that he may preſerve the People committed to his Charge in Wealth, Peace, and Godlineſs.* Amen, Amen.

*FINIS.*

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FINIS.